

Media and Information Literacy

Quarter 1 – Module 5: Media and Information Languages

This instructional material was collaboratively developed and reviewed by educators from public and private schools, colleges, and or/universities. We encourage teachers and other education stakeholders to email their feedback, comments, and recommendations to the Department of Education at action@deped.gov.ph.

We value your feedback and recommendations.

**Lesson
1****Media and Information
Languages**

Media and information literacy involves a full understanding of how information, signs, symbols, and meanings are being communicated through various media. Language is considered to be one important medium to communicate. As a medium of communication, language is defined as a “system of arbitrary, vocal symbols that permit all people in a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact” (Finocchioro, in Jiang, 2010). Language carries various facets and functions. In this module, you will learn one aspect of language: the language as it functions in media and information.



What is It

Media Language

Media language denotes how media producers make meaning about a certain medium (advertisement, TV show, film, etc.) they are producing and how they transfer that meaning to their target audience. It allows the audience to convey the meaning of the text through its signs and symbols. These signs and symbols used in media text do not have a single meaning. It is expected that audiences have different interpretations and will use different meaning systems. In interpreting these signs and symbols, audiences may interpret the media text denotatively or connotatively.

Denotative meaning is the literal meaning of the media text while **connotative meaning** refers to the various interpretations that the text suggests to the audience which are often associated with their culture, values, beliefs, etc. For example, the use of the nonverbal signal “thumbs up” may mean “*Job well done!*” in western cultures but it is a rude gesture in some countries in the Middle East.

Media Codes and Conventions

In interpreting the meaning of the media text, you have to be able to understand two of the most significant aspects of media and information language – the codes and conventions. Media codes and conventions are the very foundations of all the existing media. Media codes commonly have an established meaning, denotation or connotation, to the target audience. Meanwhile, conventions refer to the possible methods in which codes are organized in a product.

Types of Media Codes

There are three types of media codes: symbolic codes, technical codes, and written codes.

Symbolic codes are audience-based. The meaning of the product is not based on the product itself but on the interpretation of the audience. For example, a film with a scene waving a white flag symbolizes “retreat” or “surrender”. In reality, the audience who sees someone waving a white flag may interpret it the same way. The symbolic codes in media include setting, *mise en scene*, acting and color.

- *Setting* refers to the time and place of the narrative or a specific scene.
- *Mise en scene* is a French term that means “everything within the frame”. It describes all the features (set design, costume, props, staging) within a frame of media products.
- *Acting* refers to the portrayal of the actors in creating media products.
- *Color* considerations are highly connotative when it comes to interpretations. It is also usually associated with cultural aspects.

Technical codes refer to codes specific to a media form alone. The knowledge and connotations of different camera angles and shots make sense when looking at films and photographs but mean nothing outside those forms. The technical codes include *camerawork* (camera operation, positioning, and movement for desired specific effects), *editing* (the process of selecting, operating, and ordering images and sound), *audio* (expression and utilization of sounds), and *lighting* (the manipulation of light based on the target mood).

Written codes are the formal written language used in creating a media product. It includes the printed language (the text visible with the media frame which is the text you can see within the frame) and the spoken language which includes the dialogues and even the lyrics of the song.

Types of Conventions

Conventions refer to the recognized ways of using media codes. The types of conventions include form conventions, story conventions, and genre conventions.

Form conventions are ways in which the types of media codes are expected to be arranged. For instance, the title and main casts are expected to appear at the beginning of a movie while the credits are expected to appear at the end. A number of television series usually begin with a short recap of the previous episode and end with a preview of the next episode.

Story conventions refer to the basic structures of narratives. Examples of story conventions involve narrative structures, character constructions, and point of view.

Genre conventions refer to the common use of the elements of narratives such as the characters, settings, or themes in a certain type of media. Genre conventions can be formal or thematic and are usually linked to the expectations of the audience.

Media producers, stakeholders, and audience

Aside from media language, media practitioners also look into other elements such as the producers, the stakeholders, and the audience. The **media producers** refer to the people who initiate, plan, and produce media texts. They need to have the skill in assessing the media texts and a thorough understanding of the target product; and the processes that go into creating the products. Meanwhile, the **stakeholders** refer to people or organizations that share the same interests or intentions. The **audience**, on the other hand, is a significant element in delivering media texts. All media texts are made with a target audience in mind. Producers conduct an audience analysis before coming up with a media text. **Audience analysis** is the process of looking into the demographics (age, gender, social status, etc.) and psychology (values, beliefs, attitude) of the audience. Producers also consider the reaction of the audience by looking into the following:

- **Audience Engagement.** This refers to the reaction of the audience to the media text. Different people react in varied ways to the same text.
- **Audience Expectations.** This refers to the anticipation of the audience about the text. Producers may satisfy or shatter the audience's expectations.
- **Audience Foreknowledge.** This refers to the exact information (not expectations) which the audience brings about the media output.
- **Audience Identification.** This refers to the connection built by the media text to the audience.
- **Audience Placement.** This refers to the strategies producers use to make the audience feel that the media text is made specifically for them.
- **Audience Research.** This refers to the monitoring of the audience before, during, and after the production of the media text.